

5 More Men Quit Harper's; Cite 'Money-Literary' Fight

New York, March 10 (AP)—Five top staff members of Harper's magazine—the nation's oldest—resigned today in the wake of the resignation last week of their editor in chief.

The resignations followed a meeting of the editors with the magazine company's chairman, John Cowles, Jr., according to David Halberstam, a contributing editor.

Mr. Halberstam, a Pulitzer Prize winner and former correspondent of the New York Times, acted as spokesman for his colleagues.

Cowles Silent

Mr. Cowles, president of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company, had flown in from Minneapolis for the meeting. He left immediately and said afterward in Minneapolis that he had no comment.

The decision to quit, Mr. Halberstam said, came at the meeting in the apartment of the managing editor, Robert Kotlowitz. Those resigning, he said, were himself, Mr. Kotlowitz and John Corry, Marshall Frady and Larry L. King.

Another contributing editor, Lewis Lapham, was going to join them but had second thoughts and still is tentatively with Harper's, Mr. Halberstam said.

121 Years Old

The editor in chief, Willie Morris, a Mississippian who had

guided the 121-year-old magazine since 1967, resigned last week in what he characterized as a losing fight in the battle between "the money men and the literary men."

"The money men have been undercutting the product for the past two years," Mr. Halberstam said.

Harper's circulation has fallen from 325,000 to 300,000 in the past year, while its chief rival, The Atlantic, has gained 25,000 readers for a total of 325,000.

Those resigning said Mr. Cowles had not faulted Mr. Morris for giving most of the current issue to an essay on women's liberation by Norman Mailer. It had been reported when Mr. Morris resigned that the long Mailer piece, with its earthy, sexually explicit language, had in effect been a final straw.

"Nobody Knows"

Mr. Morris said Mr. Kotlowitz would stay on to see that the magazine's next issue comes out, but after that, "nobody knows."

"We did not meet in acrimony," Mr. Halberstam said, "but to see if there was any chance of saving the magazine. There wasn't."

He described the meeting as hopeless and said Mr. Cowles "kept citing the Oliver Quayle poll to show that we weren't getting the readers."